
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1431 Corcoran Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	January 24, 2013	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-062		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect John Linam, Jr., representing owner Lindsay Reichman, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a four-unit, four-story brick rowhouse on a site occupied by a non-contributing building in the 14th Street Historic District.

Property Description

The existing building at 1431 Corcoran is the end unit in a row of six flat-front, three-story brick rowhouses that were constructed in the 1970s. While generally compatible in form, height and materials with the surrounding historic district, they fall well outside the period of significance (1855-1940) for the 14th Street Historic District. The two buildings immediately to the west of the subject property – a rowhouse and a small apartment building -- are also non-contributing. Despite this small cluster of non-contributing buildings, the 1400 block of Corcoran Street is otherwise defined by three-story, bay-fronted rowhouses dating from the 1870s-1880s with Italianate, Romanesque and Queen Anne detailing.

Proposal

The project calls for demolishing the existing house and replacing it with a taller four-story row building raised above an English basement. The building would have a two-story projecting bay clad in wood paneling atop a brick base. The bay and building would be capped by a modest wood fascia. The fourth floor (labeled mezzanine on the plans) would be set back roughly 20 feet from the front façade.

The rear elevation would have a full-width porch on each floor and an exterior steel stair leading to a rear yard brick patio and parking spaces facing the alley.

Evaluation

The proposal is compatible with the character of the historic district in terms of its rowhouse form, general architectural character and materials. While one story taller at the street face than the abutting non-contributing houses, three story houses with raised basements are found on this street and are common throughout the historic district and the design's use of a two-story bay (rather than a full-height three-story bay) establishes a relationship with the rooflines of the adjacent houses.

However, the visibility of the fourth floor mezzanine level, seen in perspective above the shorter houses to the east, raises concerns about the compatibility of the building's massing and form. In all other respects, the building has been designed as a traditional rowhouse form to blend in with a street of other rowhouses – both contributing and non – which have a similar rowhouse form. The visible pop-up of the fourth floor above the roof line of the proposed building and the adjacent houses is unprecedented on this block, and is not consistent with the character of rooflines and rowhouse massing in the historic district. With no setback on the rear, the fourth floor also results in a very tall rear elevation that rises almost two stories taller than the adjoining houses. The height is exacerbated by extending the proposed deck structure to the top floor.

As the design is further refined, the detailing and proportions of the façade should continue to be developed. Based on the DC Building Code's schedule of building projection allowances, the width of the projecting bay on a building of this width could be increased from 9'6" to 11 feet, which would improve its proportions relative to the building. Similarly, the composition of the façade would be improved if the entrance door and windows above were centered between the west edge of projection and the party wall. Detailing and material selection for the cornice, bay, sills and lintels, and the entrance stair will also be important in ensuring that the project has a compatible level of detail, texture, and material richness.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the general concept to be compatible with the character of the historic district, with the following conditions:

- *The fourth floor mezzanine should be eliminated entirely or reduced in height and increased in setback so that it is not visible from perspective views from the street. If retained, the rear should also be redesigned to eliminate the fourth floor deck and differentiated from the underlying three-story building through a set back and/or redesign;*
- *The façade composition and design should continue to be developed, as outlined above;*
- *The side exposed side walls (above the adjacent buildings) should be finished in a masonry vocabulary – brick or stucco – rather than a horizontal siding frame vocabulary.*

Contingent on these conditions, the HPO recommends that the Review Board delegate final plan approval to the staff.